

Spencer Shakespeare  
CROSSINGS  
22 Sep – 19 Oct 2023



## **CROSSINGS – a solo show by Spencer Shakespeare b.1967**

Spencer Shakespeare aligns himself with worldwide mythology. Always searching for signs and wonders his works contain surprise apparitions of characters from the ancient world. He expresses that, "The painting is ahead of me".

His creative process stems from a meditative state reached by existing in the landscape that surrounds his studio. His work could be described as folk art, specifically linking the human tradition of mark making with place.

The viewer finds themselves drawn into expressionistic works seeking familiar shapes hidden within. Birds and horses feature strongly as metaphors for freedom and ascension. As a boy Shakespeare was an avid bird watcher and enjoyed long summer days in the Essex countryside with his pony. These half-remembered dreams are present in his work, peering through a veil into the semi-conscious state, like the feeling of buzzing heat when you close your eyes in the sunshine.

Trees are an important motif Shakespeare uses to describe a universal network of communication. Trees are important in every culture as life givers yet also keepers of the nether worlds. "Trees are people too," says Shakespeare.

When figures appear in his works, they are rarely obvious. With an air of mystery, they are often obscured as features of the landscape. The viewer feels as if they have happened upon organic scenes unplagued by modernity. Evoking the primal feeling of coming across wildlife that has not yet spotted you.

The work transports the viewer to utopias where natural forms become personified. Richly coloured marks appear in organic fashions, not instantly recognisable as brush strokes. As if crafted by nature – the texture of tree bark or a bubbling stream.

Shakespeare's Cornish studio sits in a valley between two moors. With far reaching views of ancient tors, it conjures paintings that evoke the prehistoric British landscape. Primeval bodies symbolise the elemental aspects of the paintings, earth and water become creatures with agency whilst recurring cloud motifs float above.

"Crossings" is a body of work that demands presence. The paintings act as if they were a tarot deck inviting interpretation. Contemporary painting exists here as a sacred space calling to be inhabited by those seeking rapture.

**A P Nicholson 2023**



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